

11-22-1984

Immigration, Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia

The Mickey Leland Papers & Collection Addendum. (Texas Southern University, 2015)

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LAW OFFICES
OF
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RECEIVED DEC 18 1984

11-23-84

Dear Congressman Leland,

It would be good if this got to you before you left for Ethiopia. I want to remind you--though I suspect you know--that the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and also the Bureau of Humanitarian Rights and Human Affairs are not treating Ethiopian claimants for asylum with understanding or compassion. I am being denied regularly on Asylum claims by Ethiopians who entered the US after 6/30/80, and those who entered prior to that date are continuing to have their Requests for Asylum held "in abeyance" in a sort of ploy to assure that these claimants will be unable to claim lawful permanent residence, a privilege enjoyed by others who are granted asylum and after a year are on their applications therefor (following grant, but not after "held in abeyance") are granted lawful permanent residence.

The policy of 8/8/81 (see letter from Clark, copy enclosed), is still being followed by INS, and probably by State also. While you are in Ethiopia, you might be interested in confirming the currency of such policy. When you get to Gondar province look in on the Falashas there, and do not let the bastards accuse you of intruding into the internal affairs of Ethiopia by asking questions, as they accused me. Also, I hope you get to speak with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Khartoum.

When you return I will try to see you to update you on other difficulties experienced with INS by Ethiopians. I am smothering the impulse to give you some of the facts asserted by my Ethiopian clients which INS deems frivolous because no "proof" is submitted. It would be presumptuous of me to use you for this purpose.

Bon voyage -

Sam Williamson

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

August 8, 1981

Dear Ms. Meissner:

Since Ethiopia's revolution took place in 1974 the Department of State has been recommending to the INS that Ethiopians in the U.S. who can demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution be granted political asylum, and that because of unsettled conditions in Ethiopia, Ethiopians whose asylum applications were not approved should not be deported to Ethiopia, but should be allowed to remain here temporarily in voluntary departure status and should be permitted to work. This position was reaffirmed to the INS most recently in a July 18, 1980 letter from the Coordinator for Refugee Affairs (attached).

As indicated by the Department's most recent report on human rights conditions in Ethiopia (attached), we continue to believe that there may be Ethiopian asylum applicants in the U.S.--as well as Ethiopian applicants elsewhere in the world--who can demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution if they were to return home. These applicants should continue to be granted asylum or refugee status, as the case may be.

However, conditions in Ethiopia have stabilized to the point that the automatic grant of voluntary departure status to unsuccessful asylum applicants can no longer be justified. Moreover, no Ethiopian today is allowed to leave Ethiopia without political clearance from the government, and increasing numbers of Ethiopians are taking advantage of automatic voluntary departure to remain and work indefinitely in the United States without having met the criteria either for immigration or for asylum.

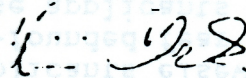
Ms. Doris Meissner
Acting Commissioner,
Immigration and Naturalization Service,
425 "I" Street, N. W.,
Washington, D. C.

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The Department therefore recommends that the INS continue to grant asylum to Ethiopians in the U.S. who can demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution, but to cease granting voluntary departure status to asylum applicants whose applications are not accepted--that is, to treat Ethiopian asylum applicants the same as those from almost all other countries in the world. For those Ethiopians who are currently in voluntary departure status, we suggest that such designations be allowed to expire on their own.

We are, of course, still prepared to offer our views with respect to any individual asylum application.

Sincerely,



William P. Clark

Attachments:

1. Palmieri/Crosland Letter dated July 18, 1980
2. Human Rights Report - Ethiopia